REMARKS

The applicant notes with appreciation the acknowledgement of the claim for priority under section 119 and the notice that all of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received.

The applicant acknowledges and appreciates receiving an initialed copy of the form PTO-1449 that was filed on 30 September 2003.

Claims 1 – 14 are pending. New claims 4 – 14 have been added. The applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and allowance of this application in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

Support for new claims 4 – 5 and 10 – 11 is located in the specification, for example, FIG. 5B. Support for new claims 6 and 12 is located, for example beginning at page 8 line 15. Support for new claims 7 and 13 is located, for example beginning at page 11, line 15. Support for new claims 8 and 14 is located, for example beginning at page 12, line 8.

Claims 1 and 3 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over US 2002/0175490, Sakai et al. ("Sakai") in view of U.S. Patent 6,327,528, Vallette et al. ("Vallette"). Claim 2 was rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sakai and Vallette, further in view of U.S. Patent 6,555,766, Breed et al. ("Breed"). The rejections are respectfully traversed for reasons including the following, which are provided by way of example.

As described in the application, the invention is directed to solving the problem of providing "a vehicle occupant detection apparatus whereby various functions can be appropriately concentrated." (Specification page 2, lines 20 - 22.) A vehicle occupant detection apparatus can detect the presence of an occupant of a vehicle seat, and transmit the results to an air bag deployment apparatus (e.g., for deploying an air bag towards that specific vehicle seat in

the event of a vehicle accident). Such a detection apparatus generally includes a load sensor (or set of load sensors) and a processing section (e.g., a CPU, etc.) which processes the load sensor signals to determine the occupancy condition of the vehicle seat. To achieve more accurate and reliable information processed by the processing section, a dedicated power supply section can be provided for supplying electrical power to the load sensor(s) and to the processing section. Furthermore, to increase reliability of operation, the electrical power can be supplied to the load sensor independently of the supplying of electrical power to the processing section.

According to the claims, e.g., claim 1, the invention is directed to a vehicle occupant detection apparatus having "a power supply section for supplying electrical power to said processing section," "wherein said load sensor is supplied with electrical power from said power supply section of said control apparatus, and said control apparatus comprises at least one connecting lead for supplying said electrical power from said power supply section to said load sensor independently of said supplying of electrical power to said processing section." (Claim 1.) Thereby, improved reliability for providing stable supplies of electrical power to operate both the load sensor(s) and the processing section can be achieved.

Without conceding that Sakai discloses any feature of the present invention, Sakai is directed to an occupant judging apparatus. The office action cites paragraphs [0020] – [0024] as teaching the power supply section as claimed. However, these paragraphs, and indeed the entire written discussion in Sakai fail to refer to any power supply section or similar. Moreover, as can be seen from Sakai, Fig. 4, a "power source circuit" is connected only to a CPU (26).

The office action asserts that Sakai discloses the invention as claimed. To the contrary, Sakai fails to teach or suggest the invention, as presently claimed, when the claims are considered as a whole. Sakai fails to teach or suggests, for example, that "said load sensor is

supplied with electrical power from said power supply section of said control apparatus." Furthermore, Sakai fails to teach or suggest that "said control apparatus further comprises at least one connecting lead for supplying the electrical power from said power supply section to said load sensor." Moreover, Sakai fails to teach or suggest that the supplying of power be "independently of the supplying of electrical power to said processing section." (See, e.g., claim 1.) To the contrary, Sakai cannot supply the load sensor with electrical power from the power supply section.

The office action admits that Sakai fails to teach or suggest a communication section. Recognizing the defects of Sakai, the office action cites Vallette. However, Vallette fails to remedy the defects as discussed above.

Sakai and/or Vallette fail to teach or suggest, for example, these elements recited in independent claim 1. It is respectfully submitted therefore that claim 1 is patentable over Sakai and/or Vallette.

For at least these reasons, the combination of features recited in independent claim 1, when interpreted as a whole, is submitted to patentably distinguish over the prior art. In addition, Sakai and Vallette clearly fail to show other claimed features as well.

With respect to the rejected dependent claims, applicant respectfully submits that these claims are allowable not only by virtue of their dependency from independent claim 1, but also because of additional features they recite in combination.

New claims 4 – 14 have been added to further define the invention, and are believed to be patentable for reasons including these set out above.

The applicant respectfully submits that, as described above, the cited prior art does not show or suggest the combination of features recited in the claims. The applicant does not

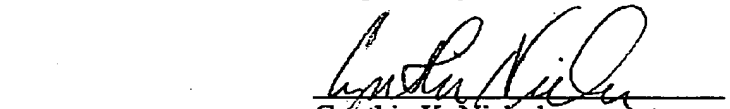
concede that the cited prior art shows any of the elements recited in the claims. However, the applicant has provided specific examples of elements in the claims that are clearly not present in the cited prior art.

The applicant strongly emphasizes that one reviewing the prosecution history should not interpret any of the examples applicant has described herein in connection with distinguishing over the prior art as limiting to those specific features in isolation. Rather, for the sake of simplicity, the applicant has provided examples of why the claims described above are distinguishable over the cited prior art.

In view of the foregoing, the applicant respectfully submits that this application is in condition for allowance. A timely notice to that effect is respectfully requested. If questions relating to patentability remain, the examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone.

Please charge any unforeseen fees that may be due to Deposit Account No. 50-1147.

Respectfully submitted,



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